



PARTICIPANT FAQ



1. Who is eligible to participate in Early Achievers?

All licensed and certified (tribal, military, Head Start, ECEAP) facilities serving children birth through five are eligible to participate in Early Achievers. Early Achievers will begin to expand in regions across the state beginning on July 1, 2012. By July 1, 2013 all facilities statewide will have the opportunity to participate in Early Achievers.

2. How does my licensing status affect my participation?

Facilities must be in good standing with licensing in order to participate in Early Achievers, defined as a license that is not suspended, revoked or on probation. Facilities with an initial license or on a probationary license may register to participate in Early Achievers and begin work on Level 2 activities; however, they must be fully licensed and in good standing before they can complete Level 2 and achieve Level 2 status.

3. Do I need to apply to Early Achievers or am I automatically enrolled because I am a licensed provider?

All licensed and certified facilities that want to participate in Early Achievers must register in order to participate. Level 1 is equal to licensing or certification to recognize the critical importance of health and safety as the foundation of quality, but programs voluntarily decide whether they want to participate and attain rating Levels 2 – 5.

Early Achievers, Washington's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)

This is an exciting time to be in early learning in Washington! As a result of Washington winning the [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge](#) grant in December 2011, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) will expand [Early Achievers, Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System \(QRIS\)](#), statewide. Early Achievers is expanding beginning July 1, 2012 and will serve the entire state within one year. Please check our website to see how Early Achievers will increase quality early learning opportunities in your community.

4. Is there a cost to sign up for Early Achievers?

No, there is no cost to participants to register for Early Achievers. Level 2 activities including required training are provided free of charge to directors and family child care providers. Additional incentives including professional development scholarships, coaching and quality improvement awards will become available to eligible facilities at later stages of participation.

5. Are providers that accept child care subsidy required to participate in Early Achievers?

No. Child care providers do not need to participate in Early Achievers to continue to receive child care subsidy. However, DEL is currently developing a tiered reimbursement system in which subsidy payments would be higher for programs that achieve a higher Early Achievers rating.

6. How do I sign up to participate in Early Achievers?

The first step to participate in Early Achievers is to attend an Early Achievers Orientation. Monthly orientations will be held in your region and will provide information about the requirements, benefits and available resources for Early Achievers participants. Orientation attendance is required before a facility can register for Early Achievers. For information on how to find an orientation, contact your local [Child Care Aware](#) agency.

7. My program is closed in the summer. Can we still participate?

Yes. Facilities that operate part year programs are eligible to participate in Early Achievers.

8. I am the director of a center with multiple sites—can I enter one application for all sites?

In the case that a facility has multiple facilities, each facility must register to participate and will be considered an individual Early Achievers participant. Each site must designate one on-site staff responsible for overseeing and completing Level 2 activities. Facility ratings will be awarded to individual participating sites.

9. I am a Head Start or ECEAP facility—how do I participate?

DEL is currently working with a small number of Head Start and ECEAP programs in a pilot to test how Head Start/ECEAP can best participate in Early Achievers. The pilot began will end in December 2012. Your Head Start/ECEAP grantee/contractor will contact you if you are part of the pilot. If you are not part of the pilot, you will be eligible to participate beginning in 2013.

10. Do I need to use MERIT in order to participate in Early Achievers?

Yes. [MERIT \(Washington's Managed Education and Registry Information Tool\)](#) allows providers and employees to document online and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education and school-age professionals. Early Achievers Level 2 activities are accessed and tracked in MERIT. Use of MERIT is a requirement for Early Achievers and will be a key component throughout participation in the following ways:

Before you register for Early Achievers:

- ▶ Your facility must be registered in MERIT
- ▶ You must have a professional record in MERIT
- ▶ You complete the current employment section of your MERIT record and list yourself as the current child care center director or family child care provider for the facility

To register for Early Achievers:

- ▶ You will complete Early Achievers registration in MERIT by accessing the Early Achievers page on your Provider tab in MERIT

To complete Level 2 activities:

- ▶ You will access, complete and submit Early Achievers applications in MERIT
- ▶ MERIT is the source of verification of Professional Training Series attendance
- ▶ You will access and complete self-assessments through MERIT

For rating:

- ▶ You will request an evaluation for rating through MERIT
- ▶ MERIT is the source of verification for staff qualifications for Professional Development & Training Standard for facility rating

11. What are the Early Achievers Level 2 requirements?

Level 2 focuses on Professional Growth and Facility Management and includes a series of activities to prepare the facility for successful participation and evaluation. Facility leadership is key to successful participation; therefore child care center directors and family child care primary providers are responsible for oversight and completion of Level 2 requirements:

- ▶ Attend Early Achievers Orientation
- ▶ Register for Early Achievers in MERIT
- ▶ Complete required activities including:
 - ▶ Multi-part application with facility profile in MERIT
 - ▶ Facility self-assessment
 - ▶ Professional Training Series

- ▶ Ensure all teaching staff have a professional record in MERIT

12. What resources are available to me in Level 2?

Level 2 participants receive free training and customized technical assistance (TA) to support Early Achievers participation. Your local [Child Care Aware](#) agency will provide you with a TA specialist who will partner with you to navigate Early Achievers and prepare for your rating. TA support is customized to meet your facility's needs and can include:

- ▶ Technical support with Early Achievers applications, including MERIT help.
- ▶ Resources and materials related to the Early Achievers quality standard areas.
- ▶ Follow-up on Level 2 trainings to help you apply the training in your program.
- ▶ Connection to Early Achievers peer mentors—providers who participated in the field test of Washington's quality rating and improvement system.

For more information, contact your local Child Care Aware agency.

13. My center is already high-quality and ready to be rated right now—do we still have to start with Level 2?

Yes. In Washington's Quality Standards, Levels 1-2 are the common foundation of quality for all programs. All licensed child care facilities must complete Level 2 requirements in order to be eligible to request an evaluation for rating. Completion of Level 2 activities such as self-assessment and training prepares the facility for a successful evaluation.

14. How long will it take to complete Level 2?

Level 2 is multi-part and ongoing, so the time to complete all requirements will vary across facilities. It is estimated that it will take six months to a year to complete all requirements.

15. Is there a time limit to complete Level 2?

Facilities have one year from the time of DEL confirmation of Early Achievers Registration to complete all Level 2 requirements.

16. What happens if I finish most of the requirements in a year but I still have one or 2 more things to do? Will I have to start from scratch?

Facilities may be eligible to request an extension to finish Level 2. Please check the [Early Achievers Operating Guidelines](#) or with your local Child Care Aware agency for more detail.

17. Will my facility be publicly listed as a Level 2 while we are completing Level 2 requirements? How about after we have finished Level 2 and are waiting for an evaluation?

No rating information will be posted for facilities that are in the process of completing Level 2 or while waiting for an evaluation. After completion of Level 2, facilities will have one year to request an evaluation for rating. After the evaluation, a rating of 2-5 will be awarded to the facility and posted publicly on DEL's [Child Care Check](#) and through [Child Care Aware Washington](#). Facilities that do not request an

evaluation within one year of completion of Level 2 will be awarded a rating of 2 which will be publicly posted.

18. What is the Professional Training Series?

The Professional Training Series consists of six core trainings that are completed online or in-person. The director or family child care provider is responsible for attendance at all trainings. Trainings are offered free of charge to the director/family child care provider and will provide STARS hours.

Online trainings:

- ▶ Introduction to the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Overview
- ▶ Introduction to the Washington State Early Learning Guidelines
- ▶ Introduction to the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals

In-person trainings:

- ▶ Introduction to Cultural Competency
- ▶ QRIS Strengthening Families Training for Early Learning Professionals
- ▶ QRIS School Readiness

19. Early Achievers is not yet available in my region—how can I get a head start?

Facilities that are interested in learning more about [preparing for Early Achievers participation](#) before their region is eligible should contact their local [Child Care Aware](#) agency.

20. What happens when I am finished with Level 2 Requirements?

When you have completed all Level 2 requirements, you will submit the Early Achievers application in MERIT and receive an approval or denial from DEL. In the case that an application is denied, DEL will provide the reasons for denial and the opportunity to complete any missing information. Upon approval, your facility has achieved Level 2 status and is eligible to request an evaluation for rating.

21. Can I stay a Level 2 or do I have to request an evaluation right away?

We recognize that not all facilities will be ready for an evaluation immediately after completion of Level 2 and may choose to continue to prepare. Facilities will have one year from the time of DEL approval of Level 2 to request an evaluation. Facilities that do not request an evaluation after one year will be awarded a Level 2 rating which will be publicly posted on [Child Care Check](#).

